

Principles of Democracy



Education and Democracy

Education is a universal human right. It also is a means of achieving other human rights and it is an empowering social and economic tool. Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world's nations have agreed that everyone has the right to education.

- ☛ Every society transmits its habits of mind, social norms, culture, and ideals from one generation to the next. There is a direct connection between education and democratic values: in democratic societies, educational content and practice support habits of democratic governance.
- ☛ This educational transmission process is vital in a democracy because effective democracies are dynamic, evolving forms of government that demand independent thinking by the citizenry. The opportunity for positive social and political change rests in citizens' hands. Governments should not view the education system as a means to control information and to indoctrinate students.
- ☛ Governments should value and devote resources to education just as they strive to defend their citizens.
- ☛ Literacy enables people to stay informed through newspapers and books. Informed citizens are in a better position to improve their democracy.
- ☛ Education systems in democracies do not preclude study of other political doctrines or systems of government. Democracies encourage students to develop reasonable arguments based on careful research and a clear understanding of history.
- ☛ Private and religious groups should be free to create schools or parents may choose to teach their children at home.
- ☛ Government-run schooling must be equally accessible to all citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, gender, or physical disabilities.
- ☛ Democratic norms and practices should be taught in order for people to understand and appreciate their opportunities and responsibilities as free citizens.
- ☛ Education for democratic citizenship includes knowledge of national and world history and of basic democratic principles.
- ☛ School curricula in democracies include history, geography, economics, literature, philosophy, law, the arts, social studies, mathematics, and science courses available to all students — girls and boys.
- ☛ Students should also be free to organize clubs and activities where democratic norms can be put into practice. For example,
 - Student government gives pupils experience in the democratic process.
 - Mock elections teach students about citizen participation and encourage lifelong voting habits.
 - School newspapers educate students about the role of a free media and responsible journalism.
 - Civic clubs promote a connection to the larger community.